

May 30, 1996

Dear brothers and sisters, members of the Vincentian Family,

May the grace and peace of God, Our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

When those of us who are responsible for the four principal branches of the Vincentian Family last met, on February 2-3, in Rome, we agreed to proclaim an annual day of common prayer, beginning this September 27, 1996. We write today to provide some further details about organizing that day.

As you know, St. Vincent believed deeply that the practical works of charity that we perform should spring from God's love. He saw prayer as one of the special means by which we come to experience God's love for us and by which God moves us to share it with others. He encouraged all his sons and daughters:

Let us all give ourselves completely to the practice of prayer since it is by it that all good things come to us. If we persevere in our vocation, it is thanks to prayer. If we succeed in our employments, it is thanks to prayer. If we do not fall into sin, it is thanks to prayer. If we remain in charity and if we are saved, all that happens thanks to God and thanks to prayer. Just as God refuses nothing to prayer, so also he grants almost nothing without prayer (SV XI, 407).

So that the celebration on September 27 might be well prepared, we ask you to take the following steps:

1. The heads of the Vincentians, the Daughters of Charity, AIC, and the Vincent de Paul Society in each city or area should meet as soon as possible in order to begin to plan the prayer celebration. After receiving this letter, would you please contact one another by phone or other suitable means as soon as possible. To facilitate this matter, we ask the Vincentian superior in each area to initiate these contacts. If there are no Vincentians in the area, then we ask the superior of the Daughter of Charity to be the initiator.
2. Please invite the other branches of the Vincentian Family in your area to join in this celebration (e.g., the Vincentian Marian Youth Groups, the members of the Miraculous Medal Association, etc.). It is especially important that the young feel at home at our celebrations.
3. We encourage you too to provide for the participation of the poor, who evangelize us by their presence.

4. The prayer could be a common celebration of the Eucharist or some other communal service, according to the circumstances in each area. If a Mass were not possible, one might envision a celebration of the word, with readings, hymns, prayers, sharing of thoughts, etc. In other contexts, one could envision a "Holy Hour," with the usual liturgical actions (processions, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, readings, etc.).
5. The celebration should be organized on or around September 27, in accord with what date would best promote the participation of the various members of our family. It is important that the celebration be truly communal, with the active participation of members of the various branches. A wise distribution of roles will guarantee that all groups take part.
6. The readings suggested for the Mass of St. Vincent should be used, along with, if you judge it helpful, other appropriate selections from his writings. Much will depend on the kind of celebration that is organized in each area. A prayer of the faithful should be organized with intentions contributed by members of the various branches of the Vincentian Family.

St. Vincent has given us a wonderful heritage. With him, on September 27, we ask that God continue to enkindle in our hearts the charity of Christ so that it might reach out to the poor, through us, in ever more concrete ways.

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Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

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Sr. Juana Elizondo, D.C.

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César Nunes Viana

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Patricia Palacios de Nava